



Committee on City Services and the Northampton City Council

Committee Members:

Councilor Dennis P. Bidwell

Councilor Maureen T. Carney, Chair

Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge

Councilor Ryan R. O'Donnell

MEETING MINUTES

Date: June 28, 2016

Time: 4:00 p.m.

**Location: City Council Chambers
212 Main St., Northampton, Massachusetts**

Note: This meeting takes the place of the July 4, 2016 meeting when city offices are closed.

1. Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call: At 4:00 p.m. Councilor Carney called the meeting to order. Present were Councilors Bidwell, Carney, O'Donnell and LaBarge. No other City Councilors were present.
2. Public Comment : None
3. Approve Minutes of June 7, 2016: Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.
4. Presentation: Mayor Narkewicz to report on implementation plans regarding the 2015 Parking Study

Mayor Narkewicz gave an update on the Walker parking Study that was completed in 2015. There were several recommendations that came out of that study and the Mayor gave the committee a summary of the plans.

One recommendation was to improve the signage, including way-finding and parking to help visitors become familiar with the City's resources. The Mayor notes that some of the City's signage is dated and does not reflect updates or improvements that have been done over time. In the FY2017 Capital Improvement Plan, there are a number of projects, including one in which the City plans to hire a way-finding signage consultant. Favermann Design is a firm that has been hired to support this initiative. Locally they have worked with Amherst and Greenfield, but have also worked on projects in Ipswich, Winchester, and Brookline. A team consisting of city

staff and community members will work with the design firm to develop recommendations for signage. Mayor Narkewicz showed examples of work done for other communities, including Ipswich. The objective will be to develop sign ideas for both attractions and amenities.

Another recommendation in the Walker report concerned upgrades in technology, and more specifically technology upgrades in the Parking Garage. The City has moved to a pay-by-credit-card system in the Parking Garage and the Mayor reports that this has been working well. People are using the credit card functionality; approx. 50% of the parking garage customers are using this feature.

There is also a plan to upgrade parking kiosks in the downtown area. The City is in the final stages of the procurement process to upgrade the kiosks with credit card capability. There are approx. twenty-five on the streets and in parking lots. The Walker report also included a recommendation for upgrades to regulatory requirements; the Mayor plans to implement the regulatory changes when the upgraded kiosks go on-line. Ordinance changes may come as quickly as August 2016 for referral to the appropriate City Council committees. Plans for Main Street, Gothic Street, and Masonic Street Lot will come first. Moving from one-hour to two-hour meters is planned. The metered lot at Masonic Street and Armory Street will increase to three-hours. There has been some internal discussions with several key departments about shifting the time restrictions from 6 pm to 8pm on Main Street only. The concern is whether this adjustment for Main Street only will cause confusion, and whether the benefit would outweigh this concern. The Walker report also includes recommendations to change long term parking pricing in the garage; however, this will be looked at in the future.

Another key piece of the study was to explore new parking opportunities in the City, both municipal parking and the possibility of private/public agreements or partnerships. A number of private lots were called out in the Walker Study that had potential for increased utilization. One area is the Verizon lot which is adjacent to the Masonic Street lot; talks are on-going and could lead to lease agreements between the City and this private company. Tighe & Bond is evaluating the Round House Lot for potential opportunity to increase parking capacity. The firm is reviewing the physical layout and considering alternative layouts. This will be important as the Pulaski Park expansion may impact some parking in this location.

The Walker report also suggested that the City begin to look at a new long-term parking facility. Mayor Narkewicz indicated that discussions are in the beginning stages; right now the focus is on coordinating the implementation of the new technology with the regulatory changes and new signage. There is funding in the capital project budget for both the design phase of the signage project and the implementation phase as well.

The Mayor reports that the contract for the Parking Department's hand-held devices ends in September, so there is a great opportunity to make sure that the newest technology syncs up with the current devices and is compatible with all of the planned changes.

The Walker report mentioned new technology that the City could bring on-line; other options besides the ticket-in-window method support ticketless methods, including a license plate system and a pay-by-space method.

Councilor O'Donnell asked whether there was a plan to re-stripe the Masonic Street Lot; Mayor Narkewicz indicated that there were mocked-up versions of combined lot plans between the Verizon, TD Bank and the City Lots that modified the flow of traffic in those lots. When talks started, the Christian Science building was up for sale; the building has been sold and there is a construction fence around the lot. If the City was able to secure extra real estate in this general area, then the City could look at re-striping the lot accordingly. If access to Cracker Barrel Alley is closed off, flow of traffic in that lot will need to be optimized.

The Walker report also includes a summary of time usage. The report notes that the Round House Lot is full to capacity during the day, but is not used as much during the evening. With the planned changes, the Mayor hopes that parking in the City will be more user friendly.

Mayor Narkewicz noted that several smart phone applications are being looked at to improve the overall customer experience, including some that have the ability to sync up with the kiosks. The Walker report included a recommendation to have a college student design an “app” specific to Northampton; Brian Foote is looking at implementing an Arts & Culture app as well. The Mayor noted that having an app that could integrate with the City’s parking system is preferable.

New technology may also be implemented to tie parking space availability to signage along the highway corridors. The Mayor envisions drivers arriving in Northampton with real-time parking availability flashing on signs along the way to the garage. Signs flashing, “fifty spaces available in the Parking Garage” might encourage drivers to head to that location. Some apps also allow you to pay for parking without having to interact with a kiosk, or add on time for extended parking.

Councilor LaBarge asked whether the City was having difficulty collecting money due to the switch over to credit cards. Mayor Narkewicz indicates that he is not aware of any problems in this area; most transactions are low in dollar amount and most are about \$1.00 or less.

Councilor Bidwell asked if there were any further talks about use of outlying private lots, say whenever there is a show at the Calvin Theater. He also asked about worker parking. Mayor Narkewicz stated that in part the issues are related to signage; people don’t know where additional parking is located. Regarding the worker parking, the Walker report mentioned a specific parking problem for the former Marinello Beauty Academy. That business has since closed. There are also opportunities to educate workers about parking and asking them not to park in prime parking spots.

Councilor O’Donnell noted that the Center for the Arts has pretty substantial parking. Mayor Narkewicz indicated that they are one of the private organizations that the City has talked to about use of the spaces. The building is still under construction, and the Mayor is aware that the organization is already renting spaces to “Click Work Space”. This is an example where the City didn’t have to get involved in establishing a relationship for shared parking spaces. Councilor O’Donnell noted that the Center for the Arts lot has the inverse problem of the Round House lot where it is filled during the day, but empty at night.

Councilor O’Donnell asked the Mayor if he had any thoughts about parking solutions for residential streets. The Mayor indicated that would be a discussion for the future. Parking in the Hawley Street vicinity may need to be reviewed once the independent living facilities are completed and the parking needs are better understood.

Councilor Bidwell asked if there was any progress regarding the complaints about parking lot located near the Union Station restaurant. As he understands the situation, rights to the lot revert to the business at 6 p.m.; however, the lot is often full at that time. Mayor Narkewicz indicates that the signage is clear and there have been discussions with the business owners. He believes that the “ball is in their court” to look at a possible solution to that problem. The agreement that is in place pre-dates the current mayor and current business owners. The Mayor points out that the City does not have the right to tow people once the lot reverts to the private owner. The Mayor notes that the kiosk issues tickets only up until 6 pm. The lease in place will run for many more years; the City received that lease as compensation for capital improvements that the City did on the lot. There will also need to be further discussions about Amtrak platform improvements. An expansion of the current platform is planned; this will provide another opportunity to look again at some of those issues concerning this lot.

Councilor Bidwell asked the Mayor how far into the future the possibility of an additional parking garage might be explored. The Mayor indicated that there is not a lot of ready funding for these types of projects right now, however, there may be funding available through Mass Works in the future. A parking garage would be a multi-year process, especially if there was land acquisition involved. Future parking needs may be tied into new residential developments that are planned for downtown, however, the Mayor points out that there are active programs to promote the use of public transportation, bikeways and walkways. This may free up capacity for out-of-town visitors. Regarding the cross-town bus that is available, there was great excitement about it in the beginning; however, ridership has not been strong. ZipCars are available in the area and the City is part of a larger Bike Share program.

5. **Items Referred to Committee:** The committee discussed appointments that were referred to the committee on June 2, 2016 by the City Council. Councilor O'Donnell moved to return the appointments back to the full City Council with positive recommendations for all; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

16.113 Appointments to Committees - Referred to committee on June 2, 2016

Re-Appointments to the Board of Registrars: Charles Klepacki of 26 Ferry Avenue and Janet Larson of 982 Florence Road, Florence

Councilor Carney reviewed the materials for Mr. Klepacki and Ms. Larson; both individuals are up for re-appointment to the board of Registrars. Both are keenly interested in continuing to participate on this committee and gave solid reasons for why they should continue as members.

Re-Appointment to the Central Business Architecture Committee: Bruce Kriviskey of 23 Ice Pond Drive, Florence

Councilor O'Donnell spoke to Mr. Krivesky about his reappointment to the Central Business Architecture Committee. Mr. Krivesky has extensive experience in Fairfax, Virginia area as an architect and historic preservation planner. He is extremely experienced and well qualified to serve on this committee.

Re-Appointment to the Disability Commission: Hannah Coyle of 3 Hampton Avenue

Councilor LaBarge notes that Ms. Coyle would like to continue to participate on the Disability Commission. She would like to continue to be a voice for other members of the community who may have a disability, and continue to find ways that allow access to various amenities and venues for all members of the community.

Appointment to the Disability Commission: Judith Kimberly of 659 Park Hill Road, Florence

Councilor LaBarge notes that Ms. Kimberly would like to be more involved in the City and believes that this is the right committee where she can offer her skills and expertise. She has been highly involved in the disability community both professionally and personally; professionally she has been a program director for Stavros Center for Independent Living and is a former board

member of Independent Living Resources, Inc. She has also worked in the medical field as a registered therapist and has a working knowledge of the ADA requirements.

Appointment to the Housing Partnership: Greta Hagen of 16 Market Street, #2C

Councilor Bidwell spoke to Ms. Hagen about her appointment; Ms. Hagen is Assistant Director of Development for Safe Passage in Northampton. She would bring to this committee her sensitivity to housing needs for that population. She is also concerned about worker housing. Working in a non-profit industry, sometimes it is difficult to make ends meet if you don't make a decent salary.

Re-Appointment to the Housing Partnership: Gordon Shaw of 582 Haydenville Road, Leeds

Councilor Bidwell has been unable to reach Mr. Shaw to discuss his appointment. Mr. Shaw is currently the Chair of the Housing Partnership Committee; he is highly regarded in this capacity.

6. Update regarding Upcoming Dept. Presentations - Changes? Topics?

8/1/2016 (both Parks & Rec & Veterans Services are unable to present) – meeting to be cancelled; the next meeting will take place during the August 18, 2016 City Council Meeting to discuss any appointments referred on July 14.

8/29/2016 (Building Commissioner)

10/3/2016 (Forbes Library & Lilly Library) – the committee decided that since the Forbes Library presented at a recent Budget Hearing, it would not be necessary for them to present again in October.

11/7/2016 (Senior Services)

12/5/2016 (Information Technology)

Committee members will forward topics that they would like presented to the City Council Admin Assistant.

7. New Business: None

8. Adjourn: At 4:47 p.m. Councilor Bidwell moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Prepared By:

P. Powers, Administrative Assistant to the City Council

413.587.1210; ppowers@northamptonma.gov